# Bernese Sandstone

Diploma Fall 2023 Christopher Aebi

# In the beginning there was a fire...

In May of 1405, two hundred years after its founding, the city of Bern was ravaged by a devastating fire. A few flames quickly turned into an inferno and spread easily across the city, built mostly out of wood. More than six hundred buildings were destroyed and over one hundred people killed. In order to avoid similar catastrophes in the future, the city council decreed that henceforth, the more durable and fireproof Bernese Sandstone was to be used as the main building material.

Formed millions of years ago by the layering of alpine deposits in the Swiss Plateau, the material had already been used for a few key buildings in the past and was available in abundance in the ground all around the city. Furthermore, being a rather soft stone, it was easy to extract and process, characteristics which made it an ideal choice for the reconstruction of Bern.

And thus began a century long tradition of mining and building with this peculiar material that would shape and define the city like no other. It is estimated that about one point five million square meters of sandstone were extracted in the course of nine hundred years in about a dozen quarries around the city. The peak was reached during the 19th century, when building activity increased drastically following the appointment of Bern as the Capital of Switzerland. Additionally, the city's connection to the national railway system meant that Bernese Sandstone could now be exported and used all over Switzerland, such as in Zurich and Lausanne. Traditional surface quarrying was soon complemented by underground mining, making it possible to work during the winter as well. However, due to the high demand, mining was sometimes rushed and the quarries not planned carefully enough, resulting not only in accidents but in lower quality shipments as well. Combined with the inherent proneness of the material to weathering, this resulted in many building facades deteriorating quickly and requiring heavy maintenance, giving Bernese Sandstone a bad reputation. The emergence of modern building materials at the beginning of the 20th century was the final nail in the coffin for the material and most quarries were subsequently closed and abandoned.

Today, only two remain active at a very low pace, mainly to sustain restoration efforts in the old city, since building laws still require all facades to be made specifically out of Bernese Sandstone. One of these quarries is located in Ostermundigen, a rapidly growing suburb of Bern, home to its second-highest tower after the Münster, Bern's main cathedral. What used to be Switzerland's largest and busiest quarry has been reduced to a minimum, with no more than three stone cutters working in an almost idyllic place, slowly reclaimed by nature. It is privately owned and operated by a local company dealing with natural stone and can thus be seen as part of the commercial path of the Bernese Sandstone.

Conversely, the quarry at the foot of the Gurten, Berns most prominent hill, is part of a spiritual path. It is operated by the "Münsterbauhütte", a publicly funded association of stone masons, architects and other specialists established in 1880 for the construction of the long awaited upper part of the bell tower, giving the Münster its final appearance. Afterwards, the Bauhütte became responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the Münster. As many exposed pieces of stone were deteriorating and needed to be replaced, the abandoned Gurten quarry, known in the past for its high-quality material, was reopened in 1954 and has been supplying material for the Münster ever since. After their extraction in the quarry, the stone blocks are brought to a storage location under a highway bridge. When needed, they are then transported to the actual Bauhütte, a workshop along the Aare river, where they are worked on by the stone masons, after which

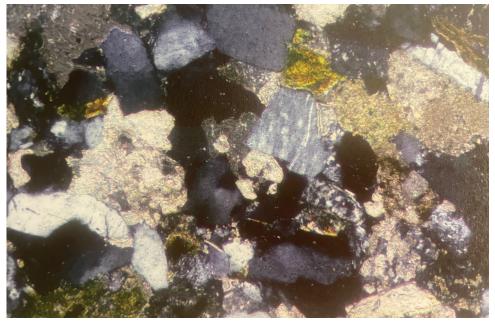
the finished stone piece is brought to the Münster. In the In the last few years however, the Bauhütte has shifted its focus from restoration to conservation, experimenting with new methods of preserving and protecting the existing stones instead of replacing them. If successful, the need for new blocks of stone could diminish in the future.

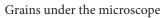
With that in mind, this project explores alternative ways of operating two of the sites along this spiritual path of the sandstone. In the past, quarrying was done in the quickest and most efficient way possible to maximise the output. No thought was given to what would be left behind, resulting in unusable spaces that were often times dangerous and inaccessible to the public. Today, with speed and efficiency no longer being a deciding factor, this could be different. For instance, simply by changing the way that quarrying is carried out, architectural spaces could be created in the process, enabling a public use during and after the quarry's lifespan. Similarly, by reimagining the way that the stone blocks are stacked, the space underneath the highway bridge could become accessible to the public.

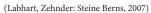
## Genesis & Composition

Bernese Sandstone was formed approximately 25 millions years ago during the Miocene period. Rocks in the newly formed alps were weathered by the rain and carried down in massive rivers and streams. Ground by the water along the way, they were eventually reduced to sand and deposited in a shallow sea at the bottom of the mountains, forming one layer on top of the other and eventually consolidating themselves under the pressure. The sea later receded, leaving behind the Swiss Plateau and its Sandstone layers of up to 200 meters in thickness.

Bernese Sandstone is a fine-grained rock. The size of its grains varies from 0.1 to 0.4 milimetres. Its mineral composition is mainly Quartz, with some feldspar, mica, dolomite, pyrite, calcite and glauconite, but the exact amounts vary from layer to layer and from quarry to quarry, which accounts for its slight differences in color. It can be greyish, blueish greenish or yellowish.



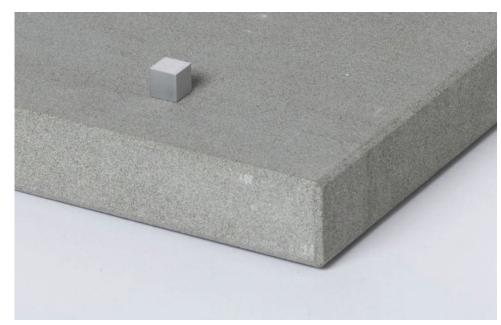






Stone from the Krauchthal quarry





Stone from the Gurten quarry





Stone from the Ostermundigen quarry

(materialarchiv.ch)

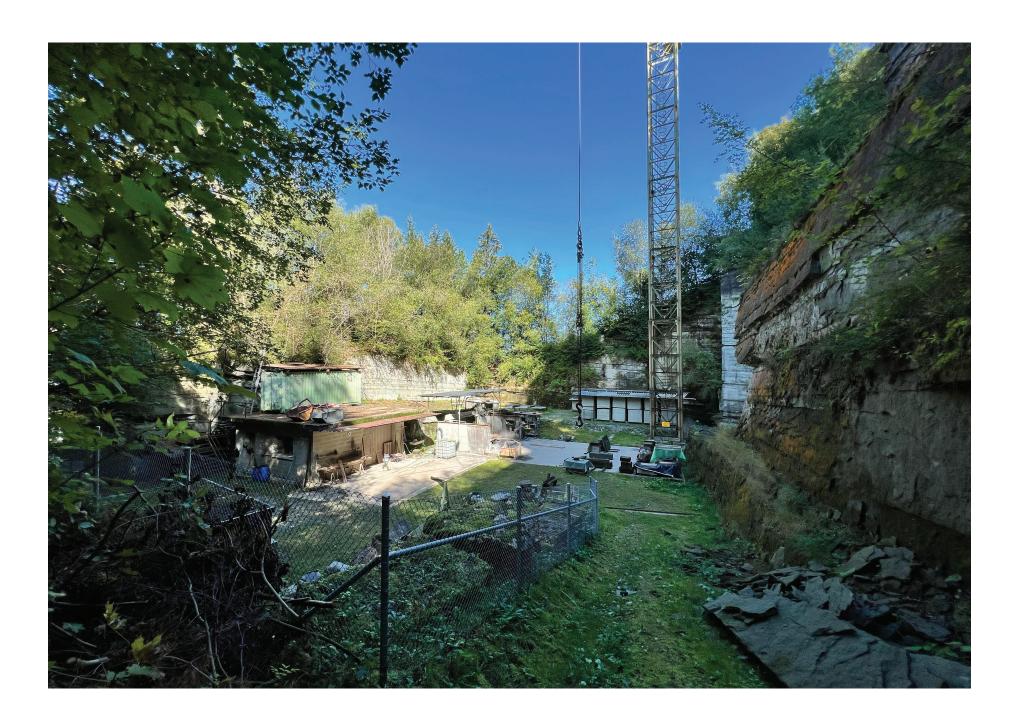
## Spiritual trajectory

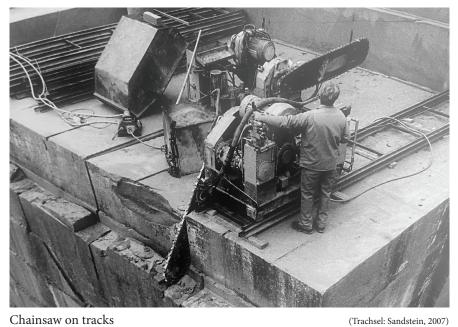
#### 1. Quarry

This contemporary trajectory of the Bernese Sandstone starts in the quarry at the foot of the Gurten, close to the affluent suburb of Spiegel bei Bern. This quarry is operated by the "Münsterbauhütte", an association of stone masons, architects, and other specialists. It was founded in 1880 for the construction of the long awaited upper part of the bell tower, giving the Münster its final shape. Afterwards, the Bauhütte became responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the Münster. As many exposed pieces of stone were deteriorating quickly and needed to be replaced, the abandoned Gurten quarry, known in the past for its high-quality material, was reopened in 1954 has been reserved exclusively for the Münster ever since.

The quarryig is made from top to bottom on platforms using an electric chainsaw on tracks, cutting vertical trenches in a grid. Then, air cushions are placed inside these trenches and expanded with air, detaching the block from the ground. The stone blocks are carried with the crane to the bottom of the quarry, where they are stacked and stored temporarily.







Chainsaw on tracks



Temporary storage



Platforms and crane



Warning sign

## 2. Storage

The stone blocks are then transported to a storage facility. It is located on a small parcel or island between the street, the train line, a bike lane and underneath the highway, protecting the blocks from the rain. Judging by the graffiti, they stay here for an extended period of time.



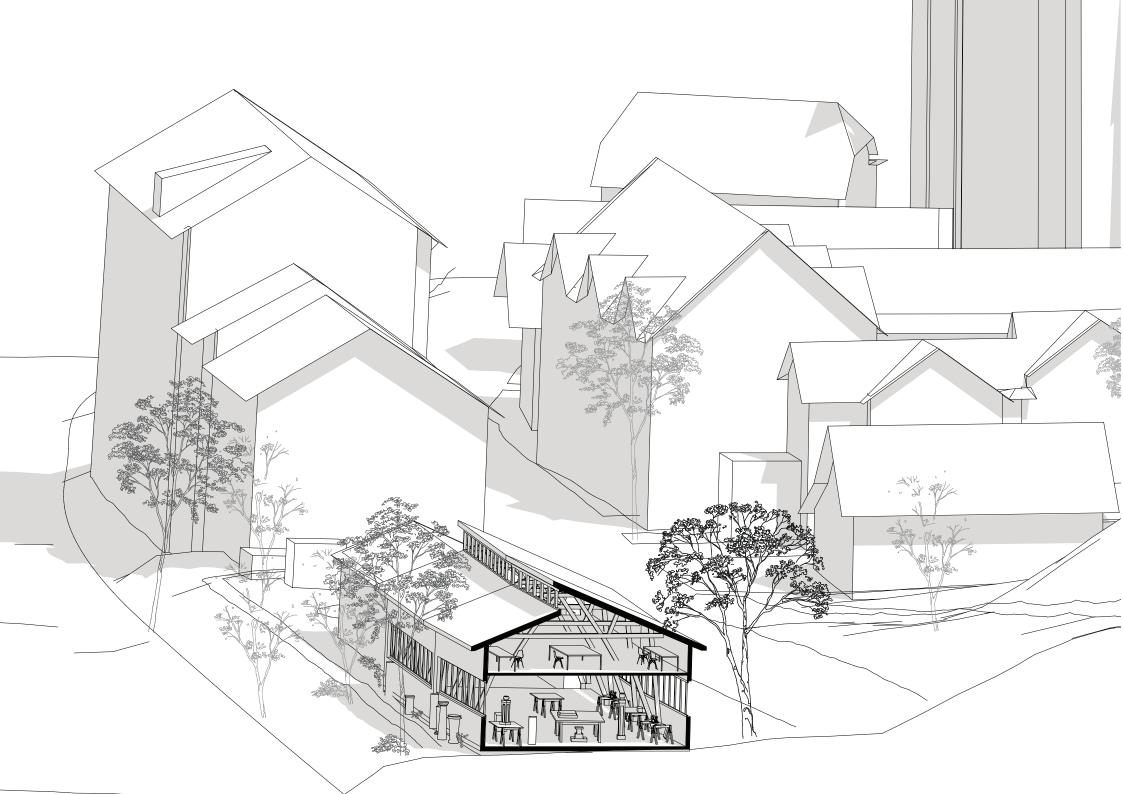




#### 3. Production

When needed, the blocks are transported to the actual "Bauhütte", the building hut. It's located at the foot of the old city of Bern, down by the Aare river, not too far from the Münster

Here, the stone masons copy damaged stone pieces brought down from the Münster to be replaced. But more often, the workers try to repair the damaged stones directly on site. For example by rebuilding their broken parts with mortar, whose composition has been carefully determined in experiments in the Bauhütte to get to the perfect color. A way of protecting exposed stones is by coating them with oils, who have been tested on samples in the Bauhütte. As we can see, the building hut is becoming more and more of a laboratory.





Copies



Laboratory



Path between the hut and the river



### 4. Building

The Münster is Berns most important cathedral. Construction was started as early as 1421 and wasn't finished until 1893, when the bell tower was completed. In these five centuries, sandstones from a variety of different quarries around Bern were used, making the Münster an amalgam of many different types of stone, some of good, others of bad quality. Ever since it was completed, it had to be cared for intensively and was mostly wrapped up in scaffolding. The Gurten quarry, its main donor since 1954, is visible from the tower.



Scaffolding on the Münster with the Gurten quarry in the background  $_{(\mbox{Trachsel: Sandstein, 2007)}$ 



Temporary working platform and office for restoration on the vaults  $_{(\mbox{\scriptsize bernermuensterstiftung,ch)}}$ 



Repairing a weathered window frame on site with mortar (bernermuensterstiftung.ch)

## Commercial trajectory

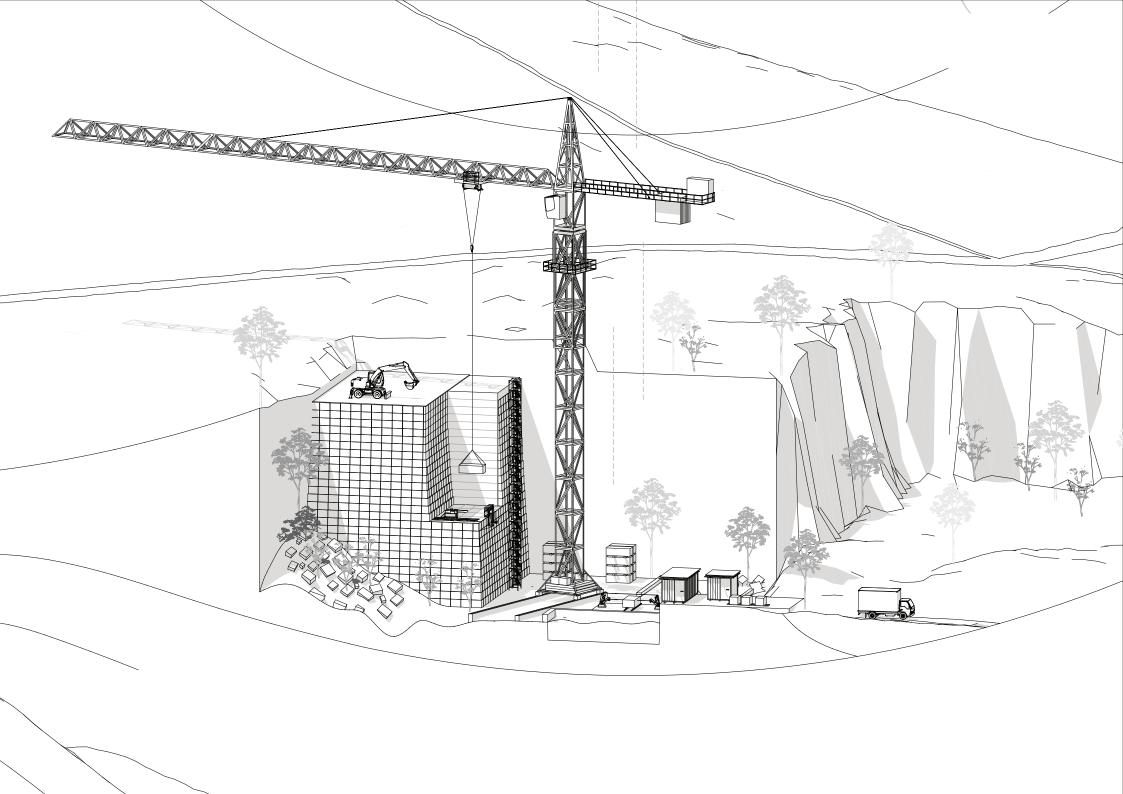
#### 1. Quarry

The second contemporary trajectory is a commercial one. It starts in the Ostermundigen quarry, in a rapidly growing suburb of Bern. In the 19th century this used to be Switzerland's largest and most productive quarry. Even a train line was built, directly connecting the quarry and the Ostermundigen railway station, enabling the material to be exported all over Switzerland.

In the past, quarrying was done using pickaxes to make vertical trenches in a grid, into which wooden wedges were then inserted and hit repeatedly until the block detached itself from the ground.

Today, as in the Gurten quarry, electric chainsaws on tracks are used for that. Afterwards, the wire of a so-called diamond wire saw is inserted into the trenches to cut the blocks horizontally, similarly to how a potter cuts his clay horizontally with a wire. The freed blocks are then carried down with the crane. Sometimes, the fixed diamond wire saw is used to cut out bad pieces of the block. These, along with other leftover pieces, are then thrown on a pile next to the platform, where they will disintegrate with time and the help of rain. The rain has also created a pond, which is used to cool down the diamond wire and where fish have found a habitat. There is also a quarry cat.

What used to be Switzerland's largest and busiest quarry has been reduced to a minimum, with no more than three stone cutters working in an almost idyllic place, slowly reclaimed by nature.

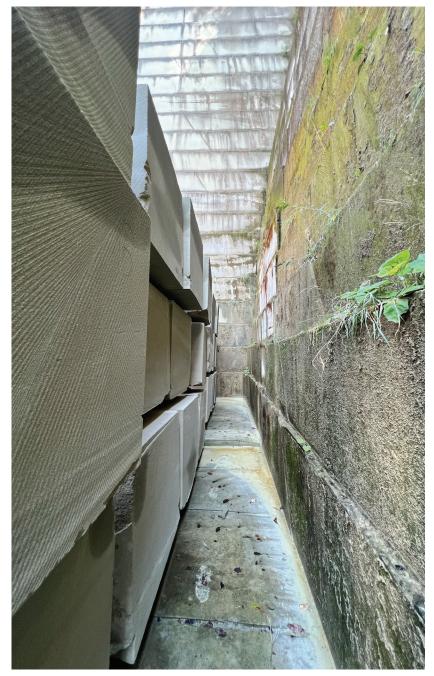




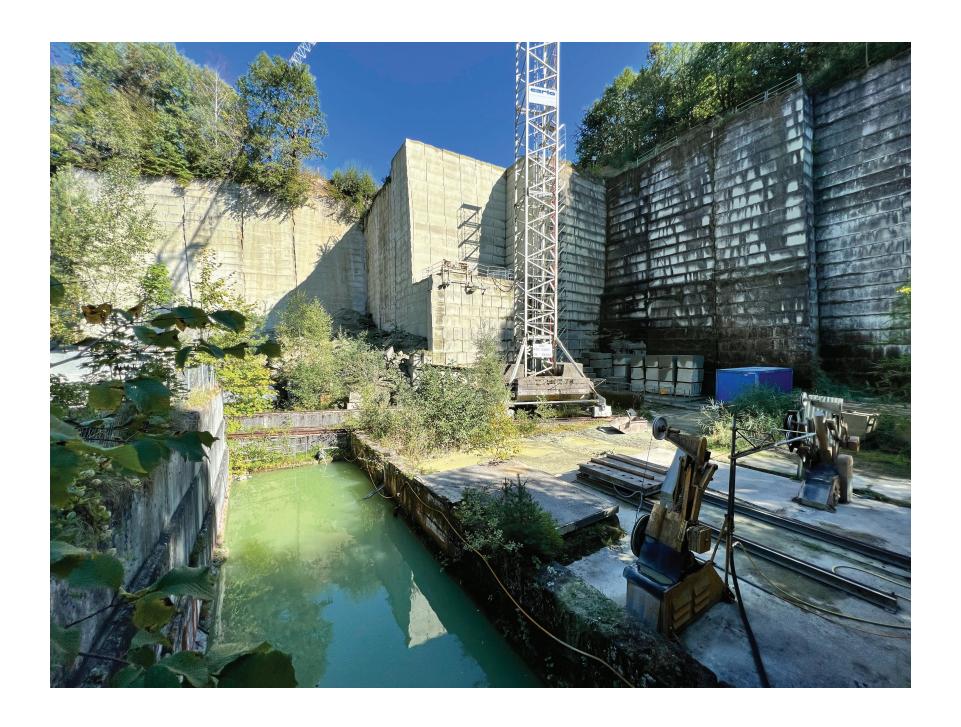
Portable diamond wire saw



Natural Pond with disposed leftovers



Temporary storage



#### 2. Production

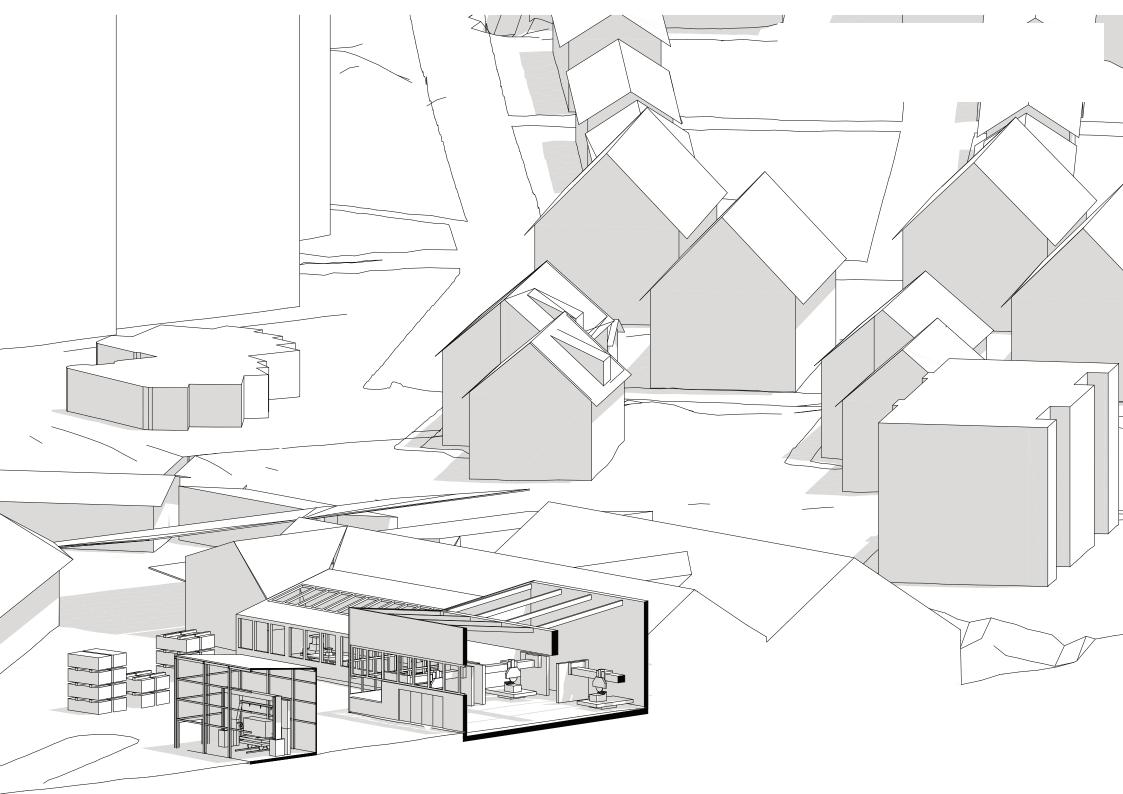
The stone blocks are brought to the workshop of the Carlo Bernasconi AG, located in a suburb west of Bern. Here, they go through three stages.

First, the large blocks are cut into smaller parts with a diamond wire saw. Water is continuously used to cool the wire and to remove the dust.

Second, the pieces are brought closer to their final shape with a stone mill. The machine's movements are very similar to a printer. The blade of the machine being the printer head, moving left and right, and the stone piece being the paper, moving a step forward each time the blade has passed. This process leaves marks similar to the flutes of a doric column.

Third, these marks are then smoothed out by the stone masons in the workshop next door. A variety of hand tools are used to create the final surfaces of the workpieces. These tools are very specific to this type of sandstone and are hand made in the forge adjacent to the workshop.

All the water used in these processes is collected, filtered and re-used.





Stone blocks from the quarry in Ostermundigen



Diamond wire saw



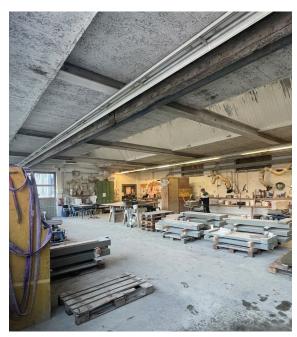
Stone mill



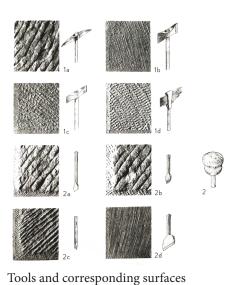
Stone mill

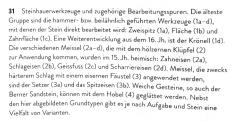






Stone mill Forge Stone





(Labhart, Zehnder: Steine Berns, 2007)

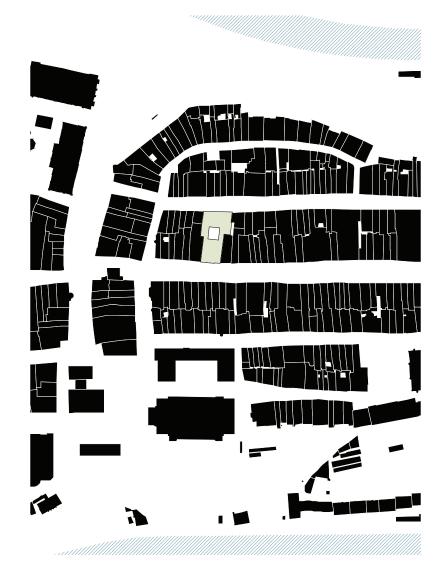


Workpiece, machine marks are still partially visible

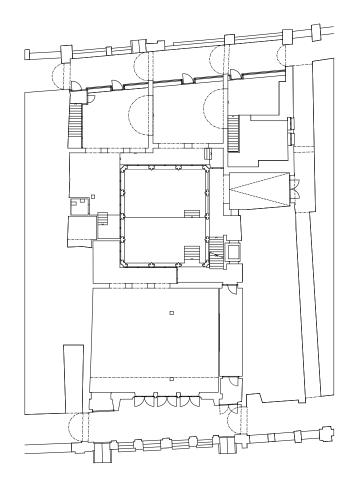
#### 3. Building

The former "Stadtpalais" at Kramgasse 72 was converted into a theatre in 1930 in what was, at the time, called a "reckless intervention". However, the venue, designed in the Art Deco style, quickly became an important part of Bern's cultural life and hosted a variety of plays and dance performances over the years, as well as silent films accompanied by an orchestra. In 2015, and after a long series of refurbishments that took away most of its original charm, it was decided to demolish most of the cinema, save for the front facade and turn it into a residential building.

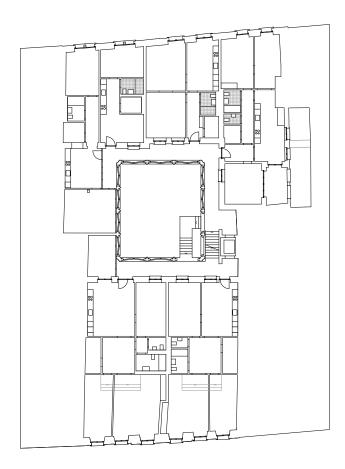
One of the challenges for the architects was to design a new back facade out of Bernese Sandstone. It had been made windows-less as the rear wall of the theatre. Instead of merely copying the facades of neighboring buildings, the design teams aim was to create something new that still looked like it belonged in the old city. One of the ways they achieved this was by tapping into the production process of the sandstone. Instead of smoothing out the marks created by the stone mill, they were left alone and now act as ornaments. Together with the reuse of some of the original stones, this creates an interesting play of shadows and colors on the facade.



Location







Upper floor



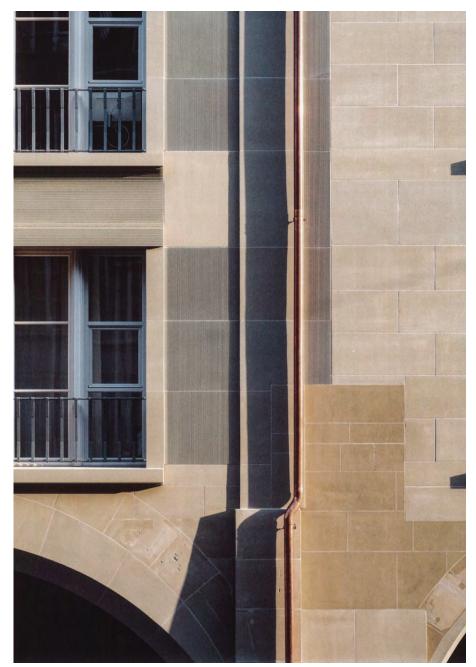
Front facade





Rear facade

(buolzuend.ch)





Section Rear facade







Window sill



Front facade

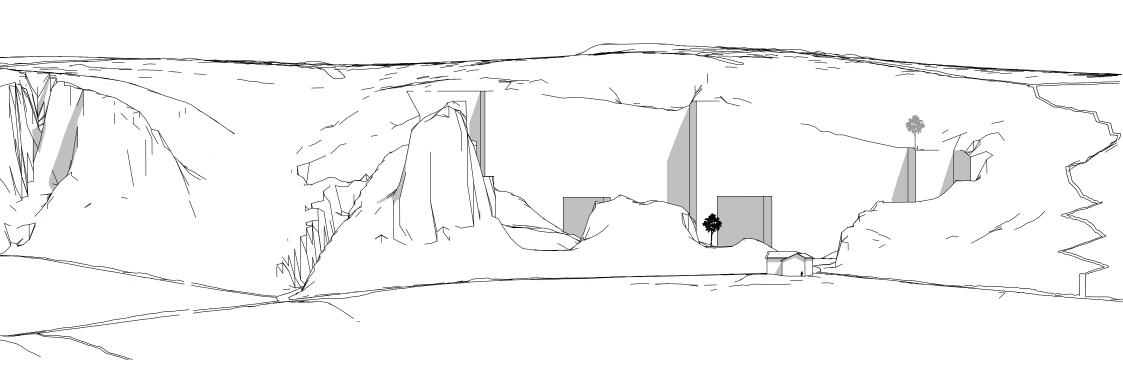


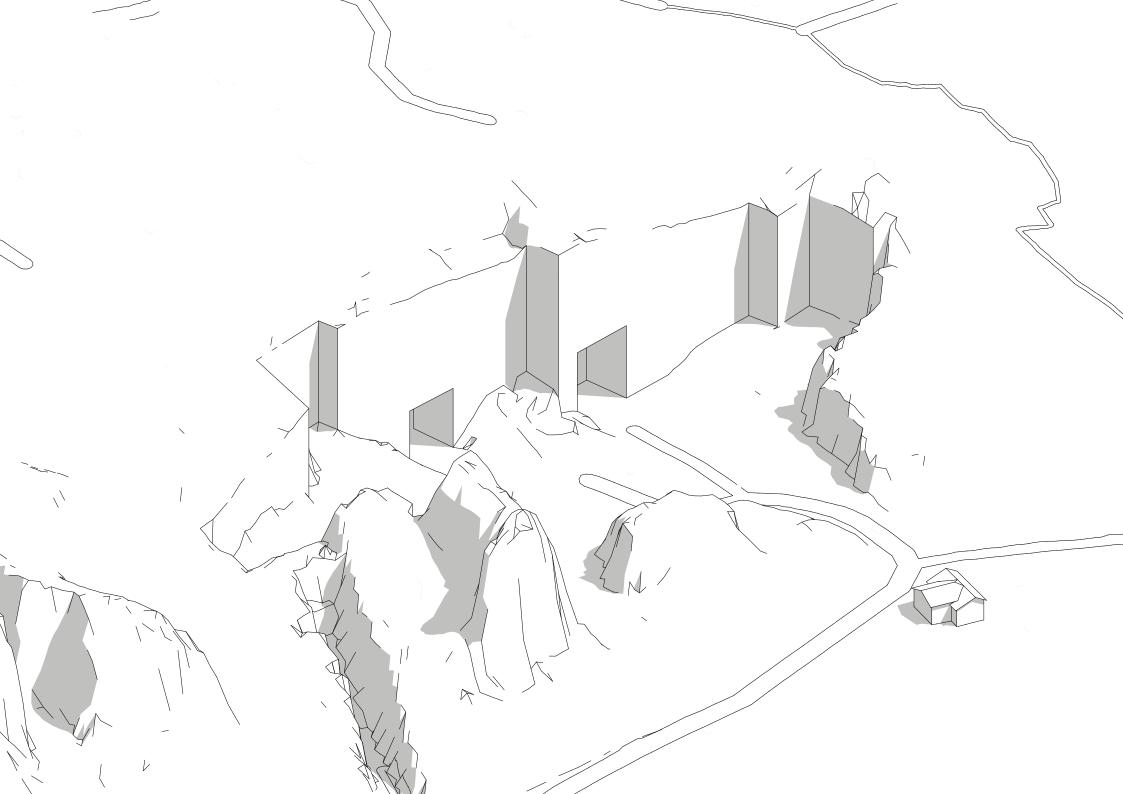
# Abandoned quarries

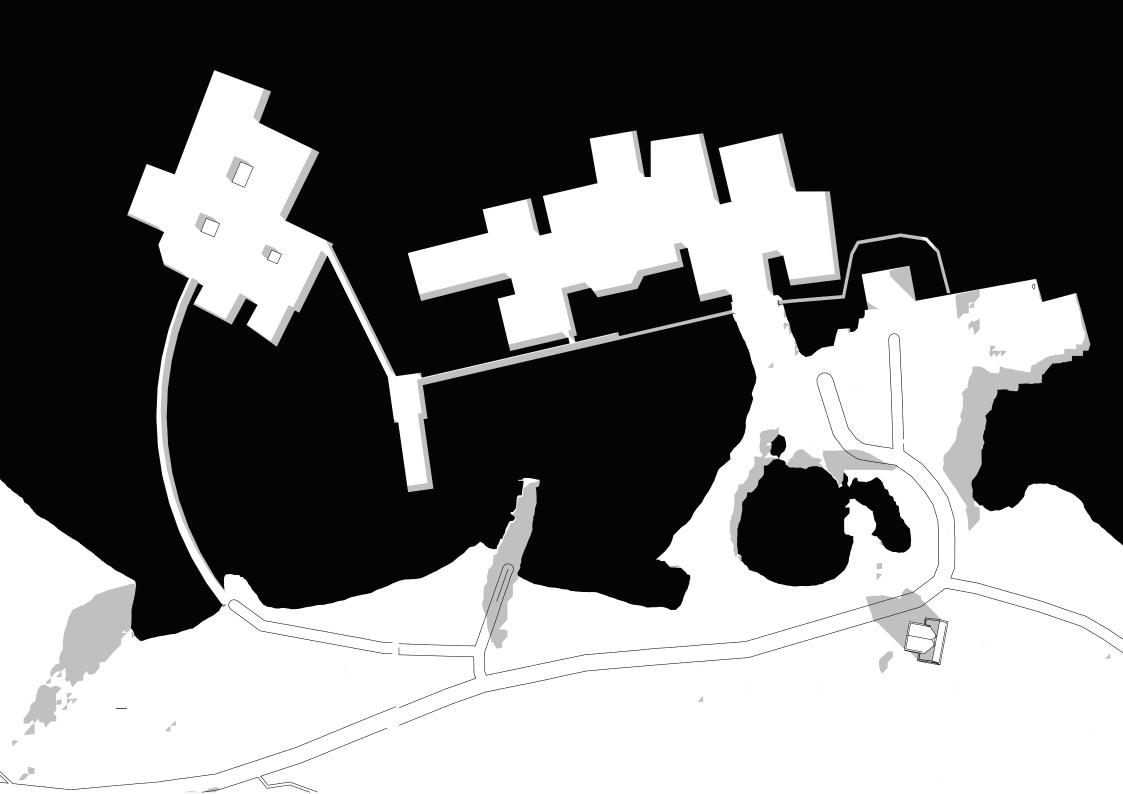
## 1. Stockeren

Visible from the city as a deep cut in the landscape, the Stockeren quarry in Bolligen, another suburb of Bern, used to be the second largest Bernese Sandstone quarry after the one in Ostermundigen. Opened in 1708, a total of approximately 600'000 m³ of sandstone were quarried, of which 400'000 m³ were suitable for construction. Buildings made using stones from this quarry include the University of Bern, the Natural History Museum of Bern, the City Theatre, parts of the Parliament Building, as well as the bell tower of the Münster. In the beginning, quarrying was done at the surface, but switched to underground mining afterwards, creating huge caverns in the process.

After the quarry was closed in 1918, these caverns were used as a storage facility for fuel by the Swiss Federation. Beginning in 1939, over 65 million litres of fuel were stored here in 31 steel tanks, enough to sustain the country and its population for one year in case of a shortage due to wars or other crises. Deemed unnecessary after the end of the Cold War, the facilities were dismantled in 2000, leaving the caverns empty once more.







# BOLLIGEN: PFLICHTLAGER STOCKEREN

# Tanks werden ausgemustert

Die Benzinvorräte des Rundestanklagers Stockeren oberhalb von Bolligen sind nicht mehr nötig. Jetzt müssen die riesigen Tankfässer entsorgt werden. Ein Augenschein im Stollen und den Lagerräumen.

**Alexandra Flury** 

Hebstlich kühl ist es unter der Erde. Die wenigen Lampen spenden nur fahles Licht. Wasser drückt durch die Wände und sammelt sich am Boden zu Pfützen. Die Treppenstufen sind glitschig. Man muss aufpassen, dass man nicht ausrutscht: Im Stollen und den Lagerräumen ist es düster und feucht. Robert Hess, Leiter der Bundestanklager, hält sich am Treppengeländer fest und schaut auf die leeren Benzintanks. «Kein Tank ist gleich gross wie der andere», staunt er. «Jeder ist in der Grösse dem Raum angepasst, wo er steht. So konnte die letzte Ecke der Kaverne ausgenutzt werden.»

#### Weniger Vorräte nötig

Die 31 massgeschneiderten Tanks stehen im unterirdischen Bundestanklager Stockeren. Sie haben alle einen Durchmesser von mindestens 8 Metern und sind bis zu 30 Meter hoch

Sechzig Jahre lang waren die riesigen Fässer mit Benzin gefüllt. Nur bei drohender Unterversorgung zu Kriegszeiten hätte es verkauft werden dürfen. Das Tanklager Stockeren war eines von zehn Treibstoffvorratslagern, die nach den Erfahrungen der beiden Weltkriege angelegt wurden. 9 Monate lang hätte die Schweiz mit diesen Vorräten versorgt werden können.

Nach dem Fall der Berliner Mauer schätzt der Bund die Risicen einer Unterversorgung anlers ein: Wenn es einen Mangel eben wird, so eher einen kuren: ausgelöst etwa durch eine icht mehr so viele Treibstoff-

während 41/2 Monaten - so die gesetzliche Regelung heute ausreichend Treibstoff.

#### Kein Benzingeruch

Doch mit der Leerung der

vorräte nötig. Deshalb wurden im den beiden Lagerräumen sion kommen.» Die Luft in den die Tanks im Lager Stockeren Stockeren I und Stockeren II Lagerräumen ist zwar nicht begeleert. Die Schweiz hat auch nicht getan. Die Fässer müssen sonders gut, aber nach Benzin ohne das Benzin aus Bolligen zerlegt und entsorgt werden. riecht es nicht. «Bevor jedoch der Rückbau beginnen konnte, mussten wir alle Fässer und Zuflussrohre sauber «Benzinreste wären gefährlich, Tanks ist die Aufräumarbeit es könnte leicht zu einer Explo-

Viel Beton

Noch sind fast keine Tanks putzen», erklärt Thomas Häm- abgebaut. Erst einem fehlt der merli von der Baufirma Frutiger. Deckel. «Doch bis nächsten April sind wir fertig», meint Thomas Hämmerli. «Dann haben wir hier alles aus dem Lager rausgenommen und es sieht wieder so aus wie vor sechzig Jahren.» Dann zeigt er auf die Wände, welche die Lagerräume unterteilen. «Diese Betonwände bleiben jedoch stehen.» Sie seien gebaut worden, um zu verhindern, dass der ganze Raum mit Treibstoff gefüllt wird, falls irgendwo ein Leck ist.

Auch der Boden ist betoniert: «Damit bei einem Unfall kein Benzin in den Waldboden oder gar ins Grundwasser gelangen konnte», erklärt Thomas Hämmerli. Der viele Beton hat jedoch noch einen weiteren Sinn. «Die Tanklager waren kriegsfest, eine Bombe hätte nicht viel zerstören können», schätzt Thomas Hämmerli. Ein Wassertropf springt auf seinen Helm und von dort auf den betonierten Boden.

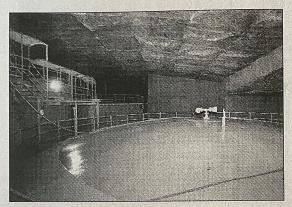
#### Früher ein Steinbruch

Wo nicht Beton ist, sind die Wände, Decken und Boden aus Sandstein. Hier im Wald oberhalb von Bolligen wurde bis zu Beginn des letzten Jahrhunderts Sandstein abgebaut. Aus dem Steinbruch Stockeren stammte der Sandstein für die Heiliggeistkirche und das Parlamentsgebäude. Von besonders guter Qualität war der Sandstein mehrere Meter im Stockeren Hügel drin. «Darum haben wir heute auch so grosse Lagerräume unter der Erde», erklärt Robert Hess. «Sie sind durch den Abbau von Sandstein entstanden.»

Plötzlich ein grelles Licht am Ende eines Stollens. Vom Ausgang West her weht ein milder Wind in den Untergrund. Selten hat die Waldluft so gut gerochen. 31.8.02



Jaturkatastrophe. Es sind also Einst lagerte in diesen Kavernen oberhalb Bolligen Benzin für den Kriegsfall. Nun wird das Tanklager aufgehoben.



Die Tanks wurden vor 60 Jahren eingebaut.

IIII DEIGESIIIIEIII WILU UUS EURJIIII

ADRIAN MOSER



In wenigen Wochen werden diese riesigen Erdöltanks abgebrochen.

ADRIAN MOSER

CHRISTIAN VON BURG

es verboten, das Gelände des ehemaligen Stocke-ren-Steinbruchs in Bolligen zu betreten. Ein grosser Gitterzaun hält noch heute die Spaziergänger davon ab, einen Blick auf die imposanten Sandsteinfelswände zu werfen. Doch jetzt geschieht etwas auf dem grossen Gelände. Die Firma Frutiger hat Baubaracken aufgestellt, schwere Baumaschinen stehen zum Einsatz bereit, und im Innern des Bergs kreischen bereits die Betonschneidemaschinen. Die Arbeiter tragen Gehörschutzpfropfen, und bevor sie die riesigen Kavernen betreten, müssen sie ihre Erkennungsmarken abgeben, damit niemand im Berg vergessen geht.

Die Entstehung der Kavernen

Von 1708 bis 1918 wurden hier, oberhalb von Bolligen, Sandsteinquader gewonnen. Das Bundeshaus, das Kornhaus und die Nydeggbrücke seien aus diesem Stein gebaut, sagt Daniel Andreoli, Leiter der Abteilung Spezialbau der Firma Frutiger, vor den Medien. Die Steinhauer bauten erst im Tag-

bau ab, merkten später jedoch, dass die Qualität des Sandsteins in ahrend Jahrzehnten war den tieferen Schichten besser ist, und begannen im Berginneren abzubauen. So entstanden grosse Kavernen und Felsenkeller. Nach der Aufgabe des Steinbruchs zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts standen diese grossen unterirdischen Hallen leer.

Erdöl im Bauch der Stockeren

Mit dem Beginn des Zweiten Weltkriegs bekamen die Leerräume im Bauch der Stockeren eine neue Funktion. Die Eidgenossenschaft, die bis heute den grössten Teil des Geländes besitzt, liess grosse Tanks in die geschützten Hallen bauen, um flüssige Treibund Brennstoffe für Notzeiten zu lagern. 31 massgeschneiderte Tanks wurden in die Hallen gebaut. Sie sind bis zu 25 Meter hoch und haben zusammen ein Fassungsvermögen von 65 Millionen Liter - das entspricht gut 50 Mal dem Inhalt des Marzilibad-Be- in der Schweiz bestehen aus frei ckens.

Gleichzeitig mit dem Bau der Tanks wurde ein sechseinhalb Kilometer langes Leitungssystem mit mehreren Pumpstationen verlegt, damit das Erdöl vom Bahnhof Zollikofen heraufgepumpt werden konnte. Um den Zugriff auf das Erdöl zu sichern, wurde ein 800 Meter langer Stollen quer durch den Berg nach Flugbrunnen getrieben und von dort eine Leitung bis nach Stettlen gezogen, wo das Erdöl kanisterweise für das Militär einsatzbereit gewesen wäre. Eine zweite, kürzere Leitung führte bis zur Lutzeren.

Bombensicher, aber teuer

Diese Anlage im Stockeren-Steinbruch ist eine von schweizweit zehn Bundes-Tankanlagen. «Keine ist jedoch so gut gesichert wie die Einrichtung in Bolligen», sagt Robert Hess, Leiter der Schweizerischen Bundestankanlagen. Die grossen Eingänge in die lagen. Die grosser Langange in die Kavernen wurden nach dem Ein-bau der Tanks alle zugemauert und anschliessend sogar mit einer mächtigen Geröllschicht über-deckt. Das Tanksystem gleicht einer Festung. Die anderen Anlagen stehenden Tanks.

In den 90er-Jahren erreichte

Vorräten zehren können. Finanziert wurde diese Lagerhaltung über den Benzinpreis. Anderthalb Rappen Aufschlag zahlte der Konsument auf jeden Liter Benzin. Doch mit dem Ende des Kalten Kriegs stellte sich die Frage nach der Notwendigkeit dieser grossen Lagerhaltung. Es dauerte zehn Jahre, bis 1999 der Beschluss fiel, die Erdöllagerhaltung auf die Hälfte zu reduzieren. «Das Tanklager in Bolligen ist zwar bombensicher, aber vom Fassungsvermögen her viel kleiner als die anderen Tanklager in der Schweiz», sagt Hess. Leiter der Bundestankanlagen. Weil die Anlage nicht wirtschaftlich betrieben werden konnte und neue Investitionen für Umweltschutzmassnahmen angestanden wären, wird das Tanklager nun aufgehoben.

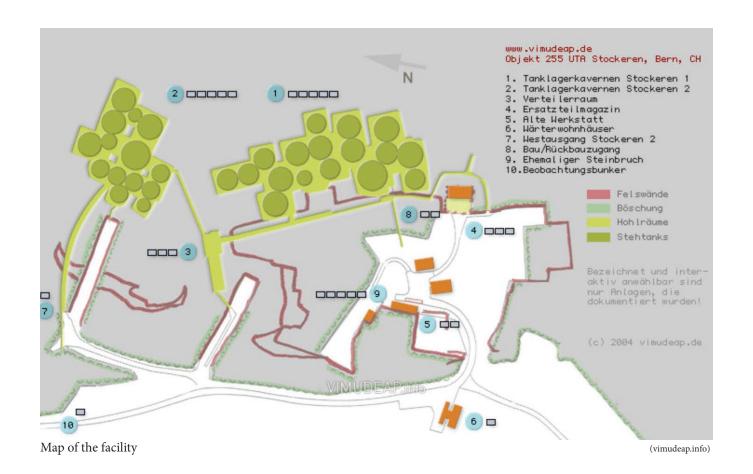
Der Abbau des Lagers

«Zurzeit arbeiten wir hier etwa mit zwölf Arbeitern», sagt der zuständige Bauführer Thomas Hämmerli. Der Rückbau der Anlage hat im Juli begonnen und wird vor-In den 900 statel erreichte die Lagerkapazität für Erdöl in der Schweiz ihren Höhepunkt. Während neun Monaten hätte die Schweiz von den bundeseigenen Haupteingang wieder freigelegt

und mit der Demontage der ersten Tanks begonnen. «Wir schneiden erst ein grosses Loch in die Decke der Tanks und schneiden sie anschliessend in Stücke», erklärt Hämmerli, Ein grosser Bagger mit einer Schere übernimmt diese Aufgabe, 2200 Tonnen Stahl werden so in den kommenden Monaten ausgebaut und anschliessend nach Deutschland verkauft. Mehr als 8 Kilometer Verteilerrohre sind im Bergesinnern verlegt. und die asbesthaltigen Lüftungsschächte müssen ebenfalls sachgerecht entsorgt werden. Der Abbau kostet 2.1 Millionen Franken.

**Technopartys im Berg?** 

Was nach dem Abbau der Tanks mit den riesigen Kavernen geschehen soll, ist noch nicht klar. «Es gab erste Ideen, den Stockeren-Steinbruch unter Schutz zu stellen», sagt Verena Zwahlen, Gemeindeschreiberin von Bolligen, «denn er hat eine grosse geschichtliche Bedeutung für die Region Bern.» Vorläufig bleibt der Steinbruch geschlossen. Laut Zwahlen werden auch in Zukunft keine Partys in den Kavernen steigen, weil an den Felsen der seltene Wanderfalke brütet. 31.8.02

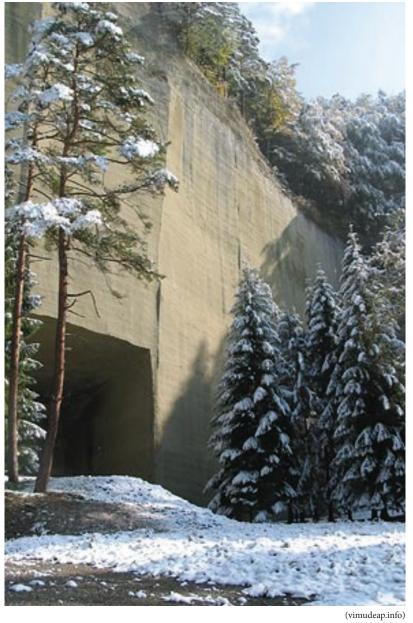


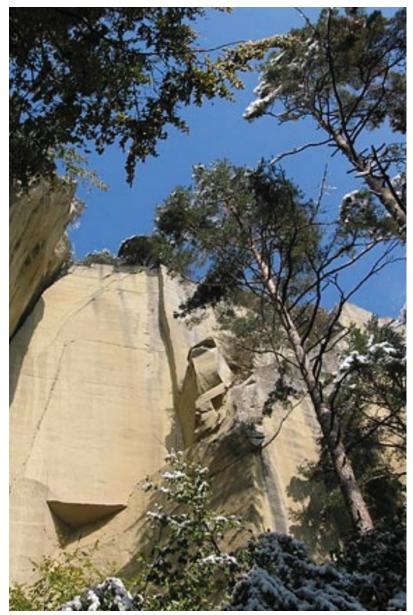


Inside the dismanteled facility. The concrete foundations of the steel tanks are still visible in the front. The old quarry entrance is visible to the right (vimudeap.info)



Concrete staircases were built to reach the top of the steel tanks.  $\ensuremath{\textit{(vimudeap.info)}}$ 

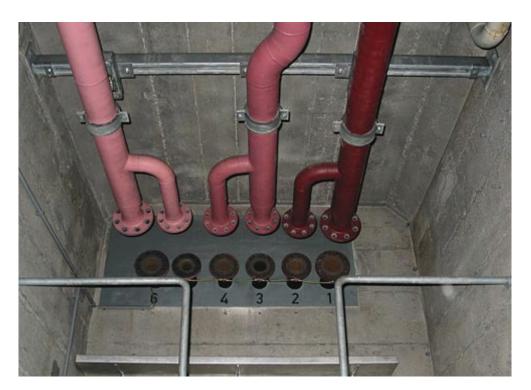




(vimudeap.info)



Pipelines were built from the train station in nearby Zollikofen to pump the fuel directly from the trains to the facility. (vimudeap.info)





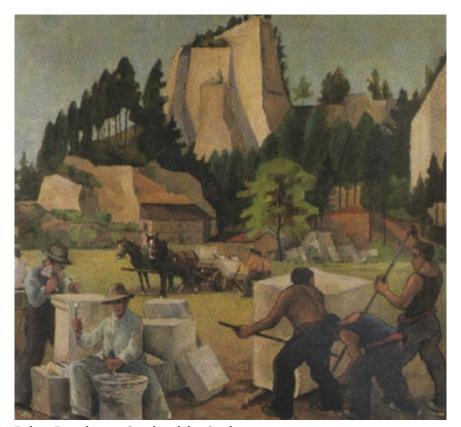
Dwellings for the workers and their families inside the quarry.

(Burgerbibliothek Bern)



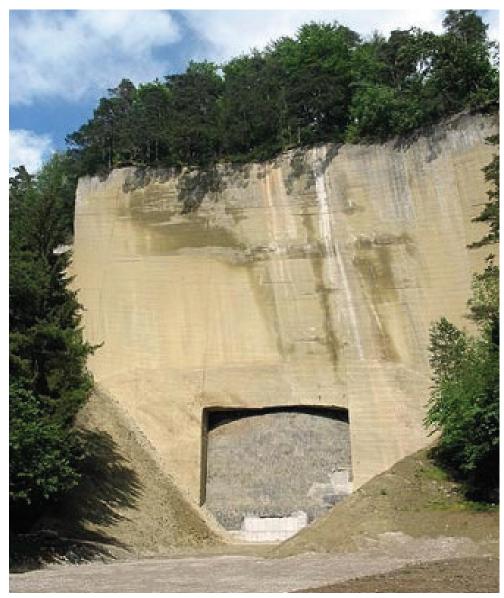
The quarry shortly before its closure in 1918.

(Burgerbibliothek Bern)

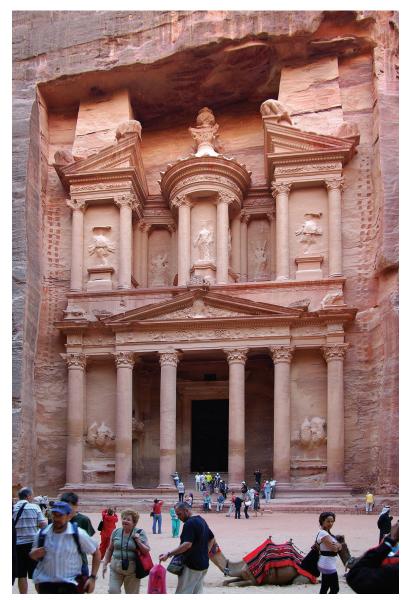


Robert Baumberger: Steinbruch bei Stockeren





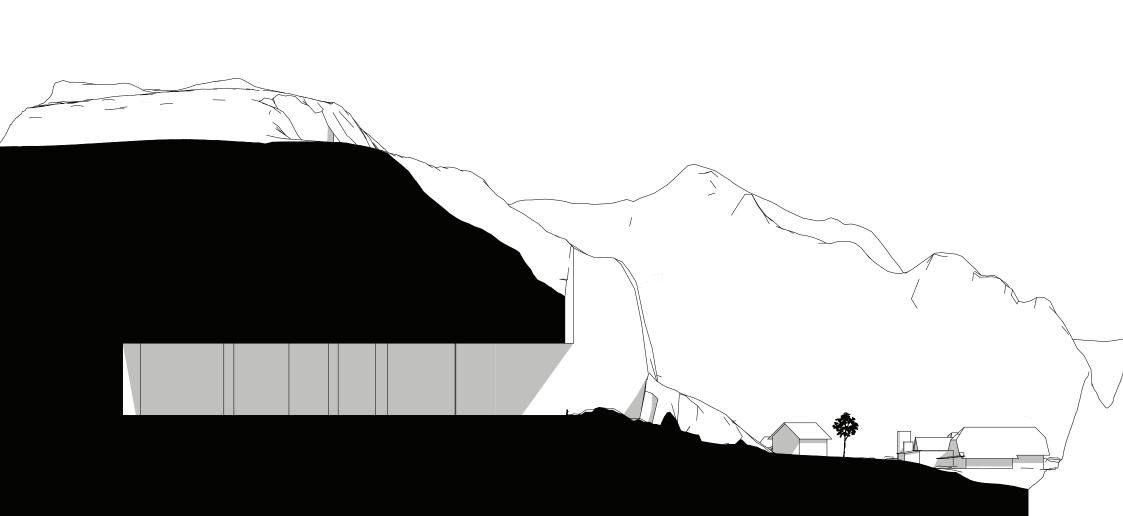
Stockeren quarry, Bolligen

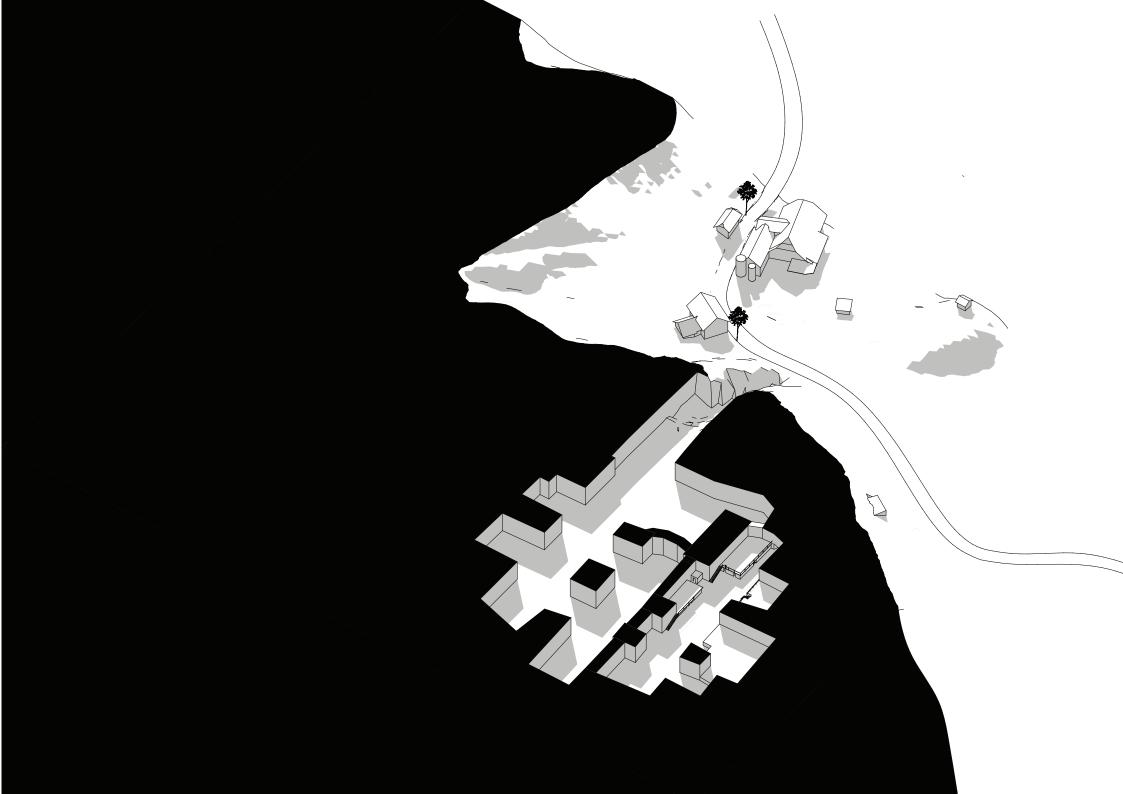


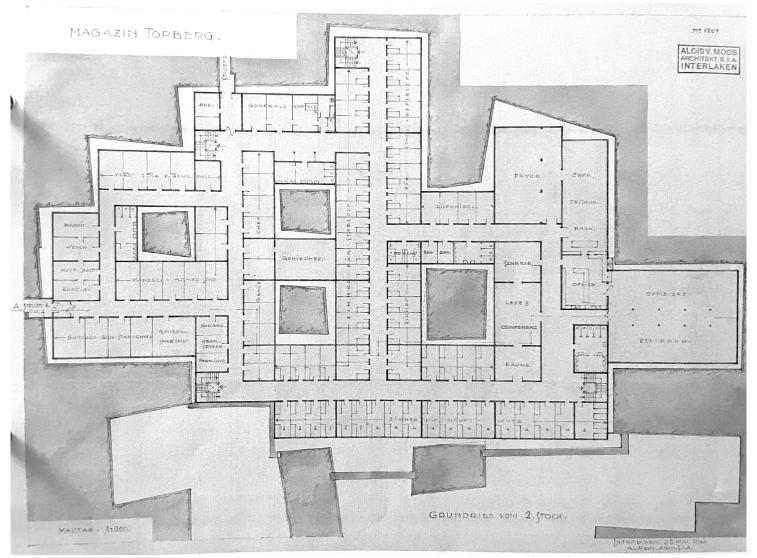
Petra, Jordan

### 2. Harnischhut

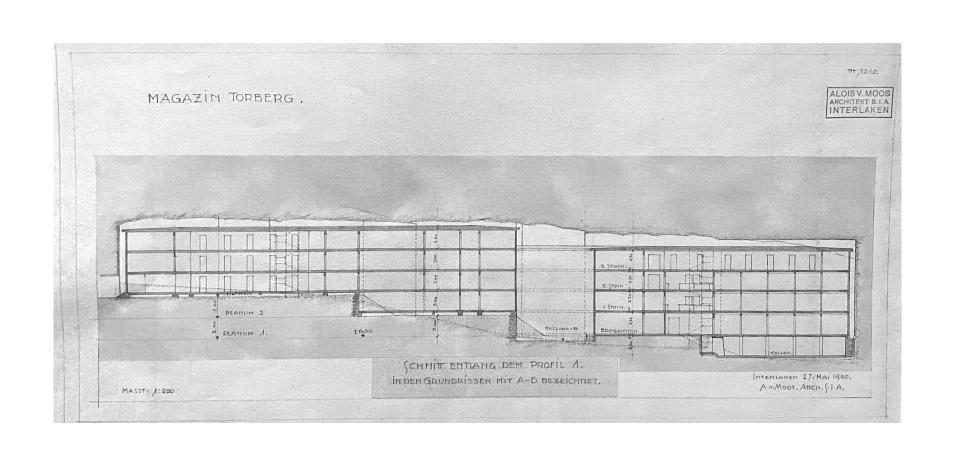
Another abandoned quarry is the Harnischhut quarry, located not far from the Stockeren quarry a few kilometers to the north. Active from 1872 until 1912, quarrying mainly took place underground. The stone from this quarry was used to built the northern facade of the Parliament Building, among others. In the resulting caverns, it was first envisaged to built a giant four story command post for the Swiss Army during World War 2. But since Switzerland was eventually completely surrounded by enemy forces, it was decided instead to focus on the "Réduit" in the alps. After the war, the Swiss Federal Council itself was interested in building a bunker here to retreat to in case of an emergency. But these plans were abandoned shortly after the beginning of construction when parts of the caverns caved in. Today, only a few concrete structures remain inside.

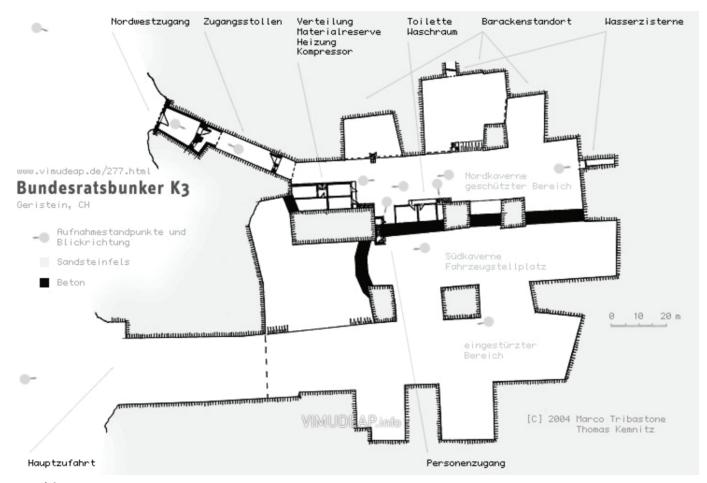






Planned command post (Bundesarchiv, Bern)

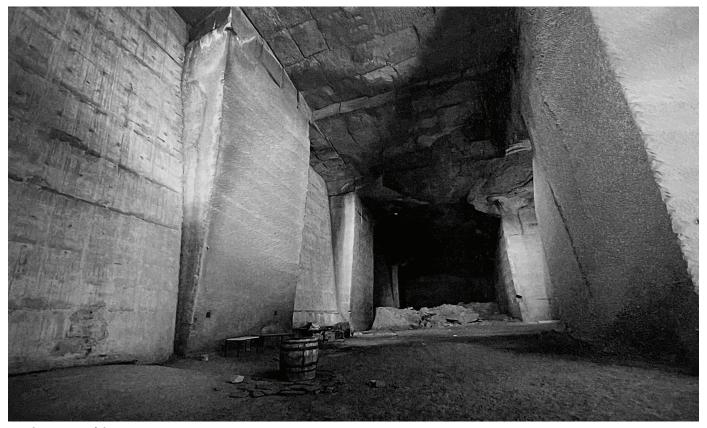




Map of the current state (vimudeap.info)



Northern part of the cavern (vimudeap.info)

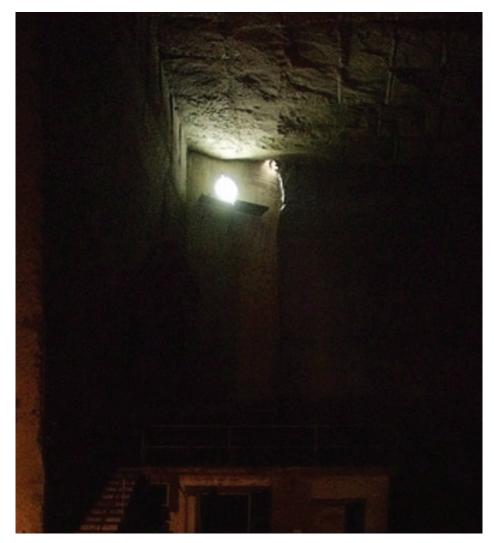


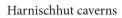
Southern part of the cavern

(Labhart, Zehnder: Steine Berns, 2007)



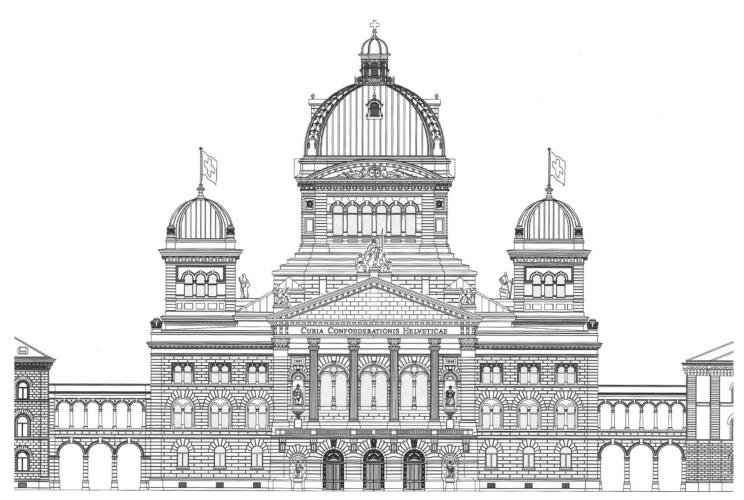
Water reservoir (ghgames, youtube.com)







Church



Northern facade of the Parliament Building in Bern

